

Quranic Discourse on Surah Al Araf [The Heights]: 109 - 129

Delivered by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad -
Khalifatul Masih IV, on 17th November 2001

[109]. ‘He drew forth his hand and lo! It was white for all to see’.

The Prophet Moses pulled out his hand which suddenly appeared to be white to the onlookers. The hand did not change in colour. It was the Glory of Allah the Almighty that in a way the eyes of the people were Mesmerised. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I has translated ‘white’ as *flawless*.¹ This could be so but then ‘for all to see’ would have served no purpose. It is a wonderful accomplishment of Quranic eloquence to have included the word ‘for all to see’ to explicate the whole issue.

The two Signs mentioned in verses 108, 109 are among the nine Signs that were granted by Allah the Almighty to the Prophets Moses and Aaron (peace be on them). Other verses reveal that the staff definitely did not turn into a serpent but that the rods appeared to be serpents to the onlookers as a result of the appropriation of Allah the Almighty. The same was the case of the hand that the colour of the hand of the Prophet Moses remained the same as its natural colour but it appeared to be incandescent to the beholders.

[110]. The chief of Pharaoh’s people said ‘This is most surely a skilful magician’.

Regarding ‘a skilful magician’ Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I states that it means *clever, authoritative*.²

[111]. ‘He desires to turn you out from your land. So what do you advise?’

It was customary for kings to seek advice from their courtiers. This was in order to seek their support and in this way they would also be counted among the obliged.

[112]. They said ‘Put him off and his brother awhile and send into the cities summoners’.

Qatada has interpreted ‘Put him off’ as *to delay*. However [Abdullah] Ibn Abbas derives the meaning from it which is *to give respite*.

¹ Hazrat al-Hajj Hafiz Hakeem Maulana Nooruddin – Khalifatul Masih I. Darsul Quran 23rd August 1909. *Haqaiqul Furqan*: ii. 220.

² Ibid, 221.

[113]. ‘Who should summon to thee every skilled magician’.

Fakhruddin Razi (died 1209)³ writes under the verse ‘**Who should summon to thee every skilled magician**’:

This verse implies that there was a prevalence of magic at the time and that there were many such sorcerers. Moreover this supports the view of the *Mutakallimin*⁴ that Allah the Almighty shows such Miracles to every Prophet.

So because of the fact that the art of magic was prevalent at the time of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him): the miracles shown were also similar in kind to magic.⁵

[114]. So the magicians came to Pharaoh beseeching ‘We shall of course be rewarded if we prevail?’

When the magicians asked the Pharaoh that ‘When we prevail what will be our reward?’ They meant the material reward. They were not desirous of being in the company of the Pharaoh.

[115]. He said ‘Yes and you shall also join my inner circle’.

The Pharaoh answered that ‘Yes reward there will be but it will bring you near to me’.

[116]. They said ‘O Moses! Are you going to throw first or shall we’?

As far as the miracle is concerned they were the ones who took the first step in demanding it. [Abul Qasim] Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari (died 1134)⁶ writes under this verse:

Pharaoh beckoned the chiefs and the master magicians and asked ‘What have you prepared?’ They said ‘We have prepared such magic as cannot be equalled by any worldly power other than that of the skies.

The number of magicians was 80000. Some have estimated it to be 70000 of them and some say that it was a little more than 30000.⁷

This is not what the magicians had said and al-Zamakhshari has made this up from himself. It is a conjecture of pure exaggeration. All three of these presumptions are fibs and there were no more than a few of them.

³ Born 1149.

⁴ Scholars of the *Ilmul Kalam* [science of discourse]: an Islamic undertaking born out of the need to establish and defend the tenets of Islamic faith against doubters and detractors.

[Translator].

⁵ Fakhruddin al-Razi. *Tafsir e Kabir: Mafatih al-Ghayb*.

⁶ Born 1074.

⁷ Abul Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari. *Al Kashaaf an Haqaiq al-Tanzil*.

[117]. He replied ‘Throw ye’. So when they cast they enchanted the eyes of the people and they struck them with awe by perpetrating a grand illusion.

These magicians cast their spells upon the eyes of the people, not upon the staffs. The eyes are blindfolded in Hypnotism, though Mesmerism and sorcery upon the eyes does not change the nature of things. *The Holy Quran* states that they did not change the actual properties of the things in any way. The staffs remained staffs, the ropes remained ropes. They enchanted the eyes of the people. This is known as Mass Hypnotism.

‘**And they struck them with awe**’ means such fear which is full of care and caution which means that they were awestruck with fear.

It seems as if their Mesmerism also had some effect upon the Prophet Moses and agitated him.

[118]. Then We inspired Moses thus: ‘Throw thy rod’ and lo! It swallowed up whatever they had feigned.

It does not say that it devoured their rods. This entire converse in *The Holy Quran* is extremely eloquent and authoritative and reveals the fact of the matter.

The lexicographical meanings of ‘**swallowed up**’ are to take skilfully and it is used for something that is emitted from the mouth or taken by the hand. ‘**Whatever they had feigned**’ is very important in this context. The rod devoured the falsehood, not any rope.

The reality of Magic is explained in verses 117, 118. It says ‘**they enchanted the eyes of the people**’ their eyes were sort of Mesmerised albeit their ropes remained ropes just as they were. It also influenced the Prophet Moses but when Allah the Almighty told him to throw down his staff suddenly the sorcery of these magicians was broken and their effect was removed from the audience.

[119]. Thus was the Truth established and their works proved vain.

[120]. Thus were they vanquished there and then and they returned humiliated.

The Pharaoh had gathered the sorcerers so that a great fanfare would be held if they won the rout but when the truth was revealed and the falsehood of what they were doing became apparent rather than hold a great celebration they returned from that place in abject humiliation.

[121]. So the magicians were thrown to their knees.

Allah the Almighty states *that the magicians were impelled to fall to their knees*. It is not stated here that the magicians fell to their knees but that they were ‘**thrown to their knees**’.

This shows that the miracle was so powerful and wonderful that they felt that it has occurred through a Divine agency. Once someone is successfully Mesmerised or Hypnotised they cannot overpower it. These magicians had enchanted the entire crowd. It even influenced the Prophet Moses which is why God spoke to him a second time. However they saw that the effect of their charm was completely broken and had no effect either on the crowd or upon the Prophet Moses.

[122]. Then they said ‘We believe in the Lord of the worlds’.

[123]. ‘The Lord of Moses and Aaron’.

So they were awestruck and said ‘*We believe in the Lord of the Worlds who is the Lord of Moses and Aaron*’. Moses and Aaron did not believe in the Pharaoh as their master, so this in fact includes a denial of the Pharaoh. Al Razi states under these verses that:

It is the opinion of the *Mutakallimin* that this verse stands among the greatest testaments to the primacy of knowledge and this is so because those nations were very knowledgeable regarding the art of sorcery and this is why they found the miracle of the Prophet Jesus [sic] (peace be upon him) to have been beyond the boundaries of magic and recognised it as among the Wonders of Allah the Almighty and not through any miracle of human endeavour. Moreover had they not been perfect masters of the occult they would not have been able to comprehend this through their *dianoia*.⁸

[124]. Pharaoh said ‘Have you believed in him before I gave you leave!? Surely this is a plot you have hatched up in the city that you may drive out therefrom its inhabitants, but you will soon come to know’.

When these magicians announced their belief in the Lord of the Prophets Moses and Aaron the Pharaoh said ‘**Have you believed in him before I gave you leave!?’**

The Prophet Moses was of the same nation as the magicians so the Pharaoh scorned them saying ‘*Who are you? How dare you believe in Moses without my permission? This seems like a Scheme you lot have cooked up together.*’

[125]. ‘Most surely I will cut off your hands and your feet on alternate sides. Then surely will I crucify you all’.

He threatened them that ‘*I will certainly cut off your hands and feet from opposing directions. Then I will certainly crucify all of you together*’. The question is whether their hands and feet

⁸ Razi.

The Caliph clarified that the example given should have been that of the Prophet Moses (peace be on him) but that the name is misprinted as Jesus in the text before him.

[Translator].

were really cut off or not. The tone of *The Noble Quran* reveals that they were not cut off at all. The threat was pretty emphatic but despite that the magicians who had been defeated held fast to their belief. It is written in the *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* that the Pharaoh was the first person to cut off the feet from opposite directions and punish by crucifixion.⁹ This is incorrect. The magicians had performed the exodus with the Prophet Moses. This was because the Pharaoh became really scared and knew in his heart of hearts that Moses had some great power with him.

[127]. ‘Thou art incensed at us just because we have believed in the Signs of our Lord, when they came to us. Our Lord! Pour forth upon us fortitude and cause us to die devoted’.

‘Thou art incensed at us’:

To consider something to be bad. It is spoken sometimes about taunting by the tongue and sometimes to avenge’.¹⁰

The Holy Quran has ‘**They hated them solely because they believed in Allah ...**’¹¹ from this *incensed* is used to connote *chastisement*. *The Holy Quran* has ‘**So We took vengeance upon them and drowned them in the sea...**’¹²

‘And cause us to die devoted’. Islam has always been *the* religion and to be a Muslim is to be obedient to God. Indeed as such every faith is Islam. It keeps branching out but that is another matter.

Under ‘**Our Lord! Pour forth upon us fortitude**’ al-Razi writes that:

‘**Our Lord! Pour forth upon us fortitude**’ proves that a great calamity had befallen them so that they asked Almighty God to enable them to show steadfastness and it is also possible that they would have supplicated to Allah the Almighty for patience in a state of belief which was granted them. So the warning [concerning them] was cancelled.

Certain commentators have written that the Pharaoh was unable to implement the cutting off of hands and feet and instead Allah the Almighty granted their prayer when they implored Him saying ‘**and cause us to die devoted**’. This is because they had prayed for a natural death, not death from murder or decapitation. This supposition is more plausible.¹³

He says that when they prayed for fortitude they implored in such a state of pain and agony that it is not at all improbable that Allah the Almighty would have accepted their prayer and averted the calamity.

God did not grant the Pharaoh the power to punish them. Al Razi’s supposition of natural death for ‘**cause us to die**’ is very important.

The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) states:

⁹ Abu Abdullah al Qurtubi, (1214 – 1273).

¹⁰ Abul Qasim al-Hussayn bin Mufaddal bin Muhammad al-Raghib. *Al Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran*.

¹¹ *The Holy Quran*. al-Burooj [The Cloisters]: 9.

¹² *The Holy Quran*. al-Araf [The Heights]: 137.

¹³ Razi.

‘Lord, send down on us steadfastness in this time of trial and cause us to die in a state of submission to Thee.’ It should be realised that at a time of misfortunes and hardships God Almighty causes a light to descend upon the hearts of those He loves; by being strengthened with this light they face those misfortunes with great serenity; and out of the sweetness of faith they kiss the chains that fetter them. When a godly person is afflicted and the signs of death become manifest, he does not start a contention with his Beneficent Lord that he might be delivered from that condition, inasmuch as to persist in a supplication for security in such a condition means fighting God’s decree and is inconsistent with complete submission. A true lover goes further forward under misfortunes and, holding life as nothing at such a time, and saying goodbye to it, submits completely to the will of God and seeks only His pleasure. Concerning such people God Almighty has said:

And among people there is one who would sell himself to please Allah; and Allah is Compassionate to those servants.

The Holy Quran. al-Baqarah [The Heifer]: 208.

That is, he whom God loves offers his life in the cause of God in return for God’s pleasure. Such people win the compassion of God. This is the spirit of steadfastness through which one meets God. Let him who will understand.¹⁴

Here the Promised Messiah is not speaking of those magicians. The real allusion is to the martyr Sahibzada Abdul Latif. He is the very one who kissed the fetters and did not even pray for it to be averted. Jesus Christ had prayed for the cup of death to pass from him. Hazrat Sahibzada Sahib is greater in splendour than that which the Christians attribute to the Prophet Jesus.

[128]. The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people said ‘Wilt thou leave Moses and his people to create disorder in the land and forsake thee and thy gods?’ He answered ‘We will ruthlessly slay their sons but spare their women. As sure as we govern over them’.

The leaders of the nation incited the Pharaoh against the Prophet Moses. Upon this the Pharaoh warned again **‘We will ruthlessly slay their sons but spare their women.’** It is the strategy of all dictatorial nations to support those who accept whatever they are told to, whoever shows cowardice and joins in with them. It is said to be the hallmark of femininity. They are kept alive and are safeguarded from the instruments of oppression. For him to have said that we will kill their menfolk and keep their women alive, proves that the Pharaoh had promised to keep alive those among them who were cowards and wanted to join him out of fear of him. If this meaning is not derived then the root of the Children of Israel would have been cut off altogether. Anyhow it is correct that they did implement it in certain situations and it is also a fact that the race of the Children of Israel did not cease to exist.

In commenting upon this verse al-Razi states:

In fact after this incident occurred the Pharaoh did not dare to come before Moses. He did not capture or imprison him but left him alone. Upon this his people asked him why he had left Moses and his people free to create chaos in the land. The fact is that the Pharaoh would be filled with great fear whenever he saw the Prophet Moses (peace be

¹⁴ Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. *Islami Usul ki Philosophy* [The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam]. English: 1910, 1979, 2010). 173, 174. *Ruhani Khazain*: x. 420, 421.

upon him). So he would not confront him. However his people were unaware of this dilemma and would incite against him so that he be arrested and imprisoned.¹⁵

Allah the Almighty has granted Hazrat Imam Razi great exegetical wisdom and his points are usually correct.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I (Allah be pleased with him) states:

‘Thy gods?’: It is worth considering that they used to think of their deity as being so weak as to be abolishable by Moses. This is how the minds of the nations who bow to others beside the *Lord of the Worlds* are befuddled.

In some countries the subjects are forced to worship their monarch while the monarch worships God. The wisdom in this is that if Almighty God was cross with the subjects due to their *Shirk*¹⁶ they would always be subjugated and if He were pleased at the monarch due to their [belief in the] *Tawhid*¹⁷ they would ever remain rulers. Those who worship the goddess of their egos are worse than those who worship idols.¹⁸

[129]. Moses said to his people ‘Seek help from Allah and be steadfast. Verily the Earth belongs to Allah; He gives it as a heritage to whomsoever He pleases of His servants and the end is for the righteous’.

A reference from Syed *Maqbool Ahmed of Delhi* would suffice to show what vanities the Shi’ite scholars attribute to their Imams. One of them is Hazrat Imam Jaffar Sadiq even though he was an extremely righteous and revered Imam. He could never ever have said anything of the sort that Maqbool of Delhi attributes to him. He writes:

It is in the *Tafsir Ayyashi* [by Muhammad Ibn Masud al-Sulami of Samarkand] that the revered Imam Jaffar Sadiq (peace be upon him) recited this verse and said that ‘Whatever belongs to Allah belongs to the Messenger and whatever belongs to the Messenger belongs to the Imam after him and it is copied from the revered Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him) that We find in God’s book **‘Verily the Earth belongs to Allah; He gives it as a heritage to whomsoever He pleases of His servants and the end is for the righteous’**. I am myself among these and the people of my household whom Allah has caused to inherit His Earth. Moreover we are the virtuous and the whole land is ours. So whoever among the Muslims settles in a part of the Earth it is incumbent upon him to dispatch its gift before the Imam of the People of the Household and whatever remains is his to eat and drink from.

This is the commandment until the time when the appointed from the Progeny of Muhammad would be manifested and with the sword would banish as did the Holy Prophet of God ﷺ the disbelievers, the idolaters and the infidels and the hypocrites. This Earth would then come into the possession of Muslims and in the possession of us Shi’ites.¹⁹

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I (Allah be pleased with him) states:

‘Seek help’: Seek Allah’s heedfulness. Grace. Succour.

¹⁵ Razi.

¹⁶ Literally ‘Associating partners with Allah’, idolatry.

¹⁷ Oneness of Allah, Unity of the Divine.

¹⁸ Nooruddin. Darsul Quran 24th August 1909. Ibid, 225.

¹⁹ Syed Maqbool Ahmed. *Quran Mutarjam va Tafsir*. (Circa 1913).

‘And be steadfast’: Work with diligence.²⁰

‘And the end is for the righteous’ – Remember that in the end success comes to those who are mindful of God.²¹

The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) states:

When Allah the Almighty grabs a people who live their lives like animals He does in order to take their life away from them. However this is not His habit in favour of the believer. The end of their troubles is made good and the virtuous are those whose works are accomplished **‘For the Hereafter with thy Lord is for the righteous’** (al-Zukhruf [The Gold Ornaments]: 36) their trials and tribulations lead to their advancement so as to gain them further experience. Then Allah the Almighty turns the tides in their favour.²²

Consider the trials and tribulations that come upon the Ahmadiyya Community and how they diminish in proportion so as to be of no comparison to the results that God produces from them. Then he states:

What do we care for our opponents? These opponents accomplish the obligations of their rank drumbeat by drumbeat. The beginning belongs to them and the end is that of the believers.²³

Avoid every kind of jealousy, envy, rancour, backbiting, arrogance, pride, all overt and covert ways of evil and vice, sloth and heedlessness. Remember well that the good end is always for the righteous, as God Almighty has said **‘For the Hereafter with thy Lord is for the righteous’** therefore, be concerned to become righteous.²⁴

Similarly he stated ‘... It is worth remembering that the commandment rests upon the ends.’ That is to say that the ends justify the real means of the commandment:

Almighty God also states that **‘the end is for the righteous’**. It is always the custom of Allah that the truthful are recognised by their ends. This humble one knows well that the task which I have taken up is still dubious for people and perhaps it will not be an exaggeration to say that it is a state wherein instead of benefit the signs portend detriment. That is because instead of true guidance much ignorance and ill-thinking has spread. But when I read the Quranic verse on one side reasoning why in the beginning the Prophets had to undergo such upheavals that they could see no path to success for ages and then finally the Divine succour began flowing and on the other I receive true tidings about the future from the Exalted One my grief and pain are completely expelled and my belief is renewed in ...²⁵

‘True tidings’ means that the support which Allah the Almighty is bestowing upon us is vexing the opponents greatly.

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²⁰ Nooruddin. Ibid.

²¹ Nooruddin. *Tasdiq ‘Barahin e Ahmadiyya’*. (1890).

²² Ahmad. 8th January 1902. *Malfuzat*: iii. 9.

²³ Ahmad, 15th January 1902. Ibid, 16.

²⁴ Ahmad, 26th May 1902. Ibid, 82. *The Essence of Islam*: iv. 311.

²⁵ Ahmad. To Nooruddin, 29th February 1888. *Maktubat e Ahmad*: ii. 62, 63. There follows the verse ‘Allah has decreed: Most surely I will win, I and my Messengers’. Verily Allah is Powerful, Almighty.’ (*The Holy Quran*. al-Mujadala [The Disputing Lady]: 22).

